

Establishing a Story Telling Story Acting Routine

Dictation

Taking dictation from the child is the most important part of the STSA process. Children are natural storytellers who are easily engaged and excited to see their words take shape on paper. Taking dictation requires the adult to listen, record, and gently scaffold students along the way. Gently scaffolding requires that the teacher choose their questions and comments with care. Storytelling is not the time for a phonics or grammar lesson. Gentle scaffolding may take the form of a teacher asking a genuine question about the plot of the story or what happens to a character. A teacher may gently scaffold a student to prompt what event comes next in the story or to give the story a setting.

While taking dictation, children may or may not notice that their words are often spoken more quickly than they can be written. The teacher may have to tell the child that they are speaking much more quickly than the teacher's hand can move. The teacher may have to ask the child to repeat a sentence and as the student pauses, the teacher can very intentionally model writing while the student watches. When taking dictation teachers should be mindful to record genuine student language and refrain from rephrasing and correcting grammar.

Some stories may only consist of one or two sentences, or only have one character, and some stories may be long and complex, but all stories should be acknowledged and celebrated. Teachers should introduce the paper they will be writing on while the student tells the story, and let the student know that they will be reminding them when the writing is close to the end of the page. At this point the teacher may help the story wrap up.

Once the story is finished, the teacher should read the story back to the child, and invite them to make any changes, additions or substitutions to their story. Then their story will need a name. Teachers should support the child in creating a title that has some relation to the story. Finally, the teacher should ask the student which character they would like to act as. That character should be circled in the story. Subsequent characters should be identified and underlined in the story. Characters can take the form of people or animals, or students can choose to act out objects like trees, houses or cars.

Key things for dictation:

- Invite child to a quiet place.
- Be patient- some stories take time to tell.
- Be accepting- some children tell very short stories.
- Any kind of paper can be used.
- Preview the paper length with the student.
- The larger you write, the shorter the story will be.
- Limit gentle scaffolds to only one or two per story.
- Write down genuine student language.
- Assist the student in reviewing their story and giving it a title.

- Circle the character the student will be.
- Underline additional characters.

To begin the story telling, the teacher should invite the child to a quiet place in the classroom where they can sit next to one another. A sample narrative for inviting the child to dictation is as follows:

“Would you like to tell me a story today?

Ok, as you tell me your story, I’m going to write down the words you’re speaking on this paper. I will only write on this page and when the page is done your story has to end.

Sometimes when you’re telling me the story I may ask you to pause or slow down because you may talk faster than I can write, and that’s okay, I promise we’ll get all of your words down.

When you’re done telling the story I’ll read it back to you and you can decide if you want to change anything, add to it, or take some words away.

Then you’ll decide which character you would like to be in the story, and you can give it a name. Have you thought of a story you’d like to tell?”

